**Analysis of Chapter 4**

Though Nick’s first impression of Gatsby is of his boundless hope for the future, Chapter 4 concerns itself largely with the mysterious question of Gatsby’s past. Gatsby’s description of his background to Nick is a daunting puzzle—though he rattles off a seemingly far-fetched account of his grand upbringing and heroic exploits, he produces what appears to be proof of his story. Nick finds Gatsby’s story “threadbare” at first, but he eventually accepts at least part of it when he sees the photograph and the medal. He realizes Gatsby’s peculiarity, however. In calling him a “character,” he highlights Gatsby’s strange role as an actor.

Quote that connects (and page number):

The luncheon with Wolfshiem gives Nick his first unpleasant impression that Gatsby’s fortune may not have been obtained honestly. Nick perceives that if Gatsby has connections with such shady characters as Wolfshiem, he might be involved in organized crime or bootlegging. It is important to remember the setting of The Great Gatsby, in terms of both the symbolic role of the novel’s physical locations and the book’s larger attempt to capture the essence of America in the mid-1920s. The pervasiveness of bootlegging and organized crime, combined with the burgeoning stock market and vast increase in the wealth of the general public during this era, contributed largely to the heedless, excessive pleasure-seeking and sense of abandon that permeate The Great Gatsby. For Gatsby, who throws the most sumptuous parties of all and who seems richer than anyone else, to have ties to the world of bootleg alcohol would only make him a more perfect symbol of the strange combination of moral decadence and vibrant optimism that Fitzgerald portrays as the spirit of 1920s America.

Quote that connects (and page number):

On the other hand, Jordan’s story paints Gatsby as a lovesick, innocent young soldier, desperately trying to win the woman of his dreams. Now that Gatsby is a full-fledged character in the novel, the bizarre inner conflict that enables Nick to feel such contradictory admiration and repulsion for him becomes fully apparent—whereas Gatsby the lovesick soldier is an attractive figure, representative of hope and authenticity, Gatsby the crooked businessman, representative of greed and moral corruption, is not.

Quote that connects (and page number):



As well as shedding light on Gatsby’s past, Chapter 4 illuminates a matter of great personal meaning for Gatsby: the object of his hope, the green light toward which he reaches. Gatsby’s love for Daisy is the source of his romantic hopefulness and the meaning of his yearning for the green light in Chapter 1. That light, so mysterious in the first chapter, becomes the symbol of Gatsby’s dream, his love for Daisy, and his attempt to make that love real. The green light is one of the most important symbols in The Great Gatsby. Like the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, the green light can be interpreted in many ways, and Fitzgerald leaves the precise meaning of the symbol to the reader’s interpretation. Many critics have suggested that, in addition to representing Gatsby’s love for Daisy, the green light represents the American dream itself. Gatsby’s irresistible longing to achieve his dream, the connection of his dream to the pursuit of money and material success, the boundless optimism with which he goes about achieving his dream, and the sense of his having created a new identity in a new place all reflect the coarse combination of pioneer individualism and uninhibited materialism that Fitzgerald perceived as dominating 1920s American life.

Quote that connects (and page number):